SOCIETY FOR BETTERING THE CONDITION OF THE POOR.

HINTS

FOR THOSE WHO MAY BE DESIROUS OF INTRODUCING THE MANUFACTURE OF

SPLIT STRAW

IN COUNTRY TOWNS, VILLAGES, SCHOOLS, WORKHOUSES, &c.

THERE are few manufactures in the kingdom in which so little capital is wanted, or the knowledge of the art so soon acquired, as in that of *Straw-platting*. One guinea is quite sufficient for the purchase of the machines and materials, for employing 100 persons for several months. Two machines cost 4*s*.; a few dozen pounds of brimstone, and the

Printed by W. BULMER and Co. for the Society, and Sold by J. HATCHARD, Piccadilly.

Price 1*d*. *or* 6*d*. *a Dozen*.

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remaining sum in straw, is all that is required; the expense of a teacher excepted, which will be from 7*s*. to 10*s*. a week, with board and travelling charges. One of the young women of Avebury, went to Devizes and taught a school of about 30 persons for six weeks, for which she received two guineas; and on similar terms, it is imagined persons can be had from London, or from any part where Straw-platting is made. The knowledge of it is no longer confined to a few persons, or withheld from the public in general.

An endeavour will be made to give a general Idea of the Process.

In selecting the Straw, which is of wheat, the best platters are very choice and particular. The Straws should be as free from blight and spots as possible, and small, short, soft Straws, are reckoned best. The Straw is cut or broken at the joints, and, the outer covering removed, is sorted of equal sizes, and

formed in short bundles of eight or ten inches in length, and a foot in circumference. It is dipped once or twice in water and shaken a little, so as not to retain too much moisture; and the bundles are placed on their edges, in a box, which is sufficiently close to prevent the evaporation of smoke. In the middle of the box an earthen dish is placed, containing a pound of brimstone, broken in pieces: this is set on fire, and the box covered over. It should remain eight or ten hours, and this process should never be suffered to be done within doors. Two days after, or as soon as the Straw is moderately dry, it is fit to be used. It will then be necessary to re-examine the bundles, select those Straws which are best blanched, free from spots, and are of the same degree of softness. A tough Straw and a pliant one, will not work up well together.

It will be the work of one person to split and select the Straws for 50 workers. A sufficient quantity should be previously prepared for several days consumption. The straws,

when split, are termed Splints. A portion of these, about a handful, is given to each worker; and great care taken that these Splints should not be dirted, or handled carelessly, so as to be bent. It is a common practice to hold a parcel of these Splints between the fingers. It is a much better method to wrap a piece of cloth round the ends of the Splints, and keep them under the arm, and draw them out as they are wanted. Platters should be taught to use their second fingers and thumbs, instead of the fore-fingers, which are often required to assist in turning the Splints, and very much facilitate the platting. They should be cautioned against wetting the Splints too much. Water takes off the fine polish of the Straw, and makes it liable to attract and retain the dust of the room. Each platter should have a small linen work-bag, and a piece of pasteboard to roll the platt round. After five yards have been worked up, it should be wound about a piece of board half a yard wide, fastened at the top with yarn, and kept there several days to form it in a

proper shape. Four of these parcels, or a score, is the measurement by which the platt is sold. Beginners that can make any tolerable platt, should very early use the best Straw; and be told that by working up part of a Straw which has a spot in it, or by dirtying the work, the value is thereby lessened very considerably, often one-half. If good Straw is kept clean, tho indifferently worked up, something will be given for the platt, as it will answer for coarse bonnets; but indifferent work, with spotted dirty straw, is worth nothing. Beginners should be early and strongly impressed with the advantage of making good platt. Quality and not quantity should be attended to. The work should not be hurried through, for the sake of saying that a yard or two more can be done in a day. A good platter can make three score a week: half that quantity can easily be done. Good work always will command a sale both in winter or summer; and the demand for coarse work will be much lessened.

These are the chief points to be attended to:—keeping the work clean; selecting good straws of the same size, such as are soft, clear, and free from spots; and the platt should have a fullness, close texture, and one edge even and free from ridges.

The machines are very small. They are to be purchased at Mr. Hoole's, No. 69, Oxford-street, and Hillman's, Foster-lane, London. They cost 2*s*. each, and will last for many years. No. 6, 7, and 8, are the common sizes. No. 10, is used for very fine splints from large straws; and No. 5, for small straws. This number should have a small wire.

The circumstances in favour of the Split Straw manufacture, are these;—the extreme cheapness of the material, and that it is soon learnt; as some acquire it in a few days, and none require more than six weeks teaching. Young persons of eight years of age, the infirm, the aged, the cripple, and the blind, may be thus employed. The work may be done out

of doors, or in the cottage, without interfering with domestic habits or employments. It creates cleanliness. The danger to morals, by the association of numbers in a collected body, is not incurred, as the parties may work at home. The profit it affords is very ample; a good platter earns 10*s.* or 15*s.* a week, and the indifferent workers about a shilling a day.

A sale is always to be had in London, Bath, or Dunstable. Subjoined is a list of the wholesale purchasers in London, and of the market-days in Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire.—The price varies according to quality and time of the year; in winter from 2*s.* 6*d.* to 5*s.* 6*d.*; in the spring and summer, from 3*s.* 6*d.* to 9*s.* per score.

18 *Jan.* 1803.

N. B. The market-day for Straw-platt at Luton, is Monday; at Dunstable, Wednesday; at Hemel Hempsted, Thursday; and at St. Albans, on Saturday.— Of the London wholesale dealers in Straw-platt, the follow-

ing are the principal:—Mr. E. Simpson, Lilliput-lane; Messrs. Corston and Co. Ludgate-hill; Messrs. Gatfield and Co.; Messrs. Downer and Co.; Messrs. Dowding and Co.; Messrs. Nudles and Co.; Messrs. Goudgon and Co.; Messrs. Baker and Co.; Messrs. Taylors; Messrs. Love and Co.; Messrs. Blyth and Co.; Messrs. Moore and Co.; Mr. J. Jones; Messrs. Marwade and Co.; Mr. Sharman; Messrs. Wilsons; Mr. Slade; Mr. Stead; and Messrs. Crow and Co.

Printed by W. Bulmer and Co.
Cleveland-row, St. James's.